

Media, PA – Congressman Rob Andrews (NJ- 01) and Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) today held a joint press conference announcing the release of the report on the study conducted by the Government Accounting Office (GAO) on the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) proposed redesign of the airspace covering the New York, New Jersey and Philadelphia region.

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At the request of Congressmen Andrews and Sestak, the GAO completed the investigation into the cost, operational efficiency, and environmental impacts of the FAA's plan because of community concerns that noise mitigation, air emissions, and other environmental impacts may not have been adequately addressed.

"Representative Sestak and I asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct an investigation into the cost and noise and environmental impact of the airspace redesign on South Jersey and Pennsylvania because we did not think the FAA had provided accurate answers on its own," said Representative Andrews. "I have been extremely concerned that this air space redesign is a colossal mistake. The GAO study confirms for me that the process was flawed. The GAO identified a stunning set of omissions. Even if the law does not require cost-benefit analysis and implementation plans, common sense certainly does. These conclusions must force the FAA to look at other options."

"I have worked aggressively with Congressman Andrews and other leaders in Congress, as well as at the state and local level, to address the concerns my constituents have over the noise and environmental impact of this redesign and the lack of certainty around costs and benefits," said Congressman Sestak. "I've said all along that the FAA's actions were based on flawed models and assumptions. This study conducted by GAO confirmed that the FAA had not conducted a true cost-benefit analysis. And, in addition, the GAO found that the FAA had no detailed implementation plan and had reached its conclusions without an assessment of the risk and uncertainty around its assumptions."

Both Congressman Sestak and Congressman Andrews thanked the GAO for their efforts in completing the investigation. While the report found that the FAA complied with legal requirements, the GAO described a number of limitations in the FAA methodology and made recommendations regarding Airspace Redesign Projects.

o "FAA did not analyze various economic impacts, such as implementation costs... A cost-benefit analysis would provide more information about the impacts of various alternatives."

- o GAO also indentified that an uncertainty analysis “would provide more information about the level of uncertainty associated with the operational analysis [of alternatives].”
- o “FAA has not developed a detailed implementation plan for the New York/New Jersey/Philadelphia Airspace Redesign with a schedule..... In addition, the final project configuration and costs are unknown since FAA has not determined the type of equipment and software that will be needed.”

Congressman Sestak said, “Both Congressman Andrews and I are appalled that the FAA would begin to implement a project of this magnitude and complexity without proper guidance that would come from a detailed understanding of the likely benefits of the project and the true costs that are necessary to realize those benefits. But I can’t say that we are surprised. Back in April 2007, in response to a question from Congressman Andrews, Marion Blakey, the FAA Administrator at the time, said that she did not know how much the project would cost – despite having worked on it for close to ten years.”

A detailed assessment of the FAA’s assumptions also shows that the benefits expected for Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) were marginal (compared with the other airports involved), and would not be realized until full implementation of an Integrated Control Complex (ICC). However, as confirmed by the GAO study, there have been no cost estimates prepared, and no decisions made regarding the ICC. So the FAA has implemented a plan for PHL which may provide only marginal benefits – but with no idea of the costs, and no plan to deliver the benefits.

“Congressman Andrews and I will continue to fight to stop this flawed plan. First, we will continue to work for legislation in the House and the Senate to withhold funding for implementation, until the proper cost-benefit analysis and detailed planning are completed. Second, we will support efforts already underway in the Courts. Presently, there are twelve lawsuits pending before the U.S. Court of Appeals – D.C. Circuit asking for review of the FAA Record of Decision. The petitioners include residents from Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Delaware, a state government, various municipal governments, and various citizen groups.” Congressman Sestak said, “I will continue to fight the FAA and its redesign proposal to protect the safety, health, and educational development of our citizens. We must address this issue in a bi-partisan and comprehensive manner so that our transportation system can operate better than it has.”

Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group

of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the U.S. Congress.

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